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ABSTRACT

This paper is intended to clarify for Florida school districts the nature of psychological services as a related service under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Florida law. Following a brief section on the legal meaning of "related services" and "special education services" the paper offers eight questions and answers: (1) What is the definition of psychological services?; (2) Who provides psychological services?; (3) How are psychological services delivered?; (4) Are psychological services limited to testing activities?; (5) How do we decide which psychological services to provide to students with disabilities?; (6) What are examples of each of these types of psychological services?; (7) When are psychological services required for students with disabilities?; and (8) Are psychological services available to students who do not have disabilities? (DB)

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Psychological Services as Related Services. Technical Assistance Paper. Revised May 2000.

Florida State Department of Education
Division of Public Schools and Community Education
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services

May 2000

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Tom Gallagher
Commissioner

Florida Department of Education

Shan Goff, Chief
Bureau of Instructional
Support and Community Services

August 1, 2000

MEMORANDUM #2000-69

TO: Exceptional Student Education Administrators
Student Services Directors

FROM: Shan Goff

SUBJECT: Psychological Services as Related Services TAP

We are pleased to provide you with this technical assistance paper (TAP) that helps to clarify psychological services as a related service. Using a broad interpretation of psychological services, as is done in this TAP, will help school districts meet the psychological and mental health needs of students for whom these services are necessary and also fulfill the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97).

This paper incorporates comments, suggestions, and issues generated from review and input by administrators and practitioners in student support and exceptional education services.

If you have any questions regarding this document, you may contact Debby Houston at 850/488-1106, e-mail: houstod@mail.doe.state.fl.us or Pat Howard at 850/922-0045, e-mail: phoward@tempest.coedu.usf.edu.

SG:ph

Attachment

cc: School Psychology Supervisors
FDLRS Associate Centers
Florida Inclusion Network

Psychological Services as Related Services

RATIONALE

The purpose of this technical assistance paper is to clarify the nature of psychological services as a related service in order to promote each district's ability to meet the needs of students for whom these services are deemed necessary and to fulfill the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97).

The term "related services," as used in IDEA '97, means "transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes speech-language pathology and audiology services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic and evaluation purposes. The term also includes school health services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training."

The term "special education services" is defined in Florida Statutes [s. 228.041(19)], to mean "instruction and such related services as are necessary for the student to benefit from education. Such services may include: transportation; diagnostic and evaluation services; social services; physical and occupational therapy; job placement; orientation and mobility training; braillists, typists, and readers for the blind; interpreters and auditory amplification; rehabilitation counseling; transition services; mental health services; guidance and career counseling; specified materials, assistive technology devices, and other specialized equipment; and other such services as approved by regulations of the state Board." Students with disabilities who are to be provided related services will have these services documented in their individual educational plan (IEP).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What is the definition of psychological services?

FEDERAL DEFINITION

According to 34 CFR 300.24 (b)(9), the 1999 regulations implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997, "Psychological services includes-

(i) Administering psychological and educational tests, and other assessment procedures;

(ii) Interpreting assessment results;

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Division of Public Schools
and Community Education
Bureau of Instructional Support
and Community Services

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FLORIDA Department of Education

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(iii) Obtaining, integrating, and interpreting information about child behavior and conditions relating to learning;

(iv) Consulting with other staff members in planning school programs to meet the special needs of children as indicated by psychological tests, interview, and behavior evaluations;

(v) Planning and managing a program of psychological services, including psychological counseling for children and parents; and

(vi) Assisting in the development of positive behavioral intervention strategies."

FLORIDA EXPANDED DEFINITION

Florida statutes and rules do not define psychological services. However, school districts throughout Florida provide students with a broader range of psychological services than described in federal regulations. The existence of these broader service delivery models provides the basis for the development of an expanded description of psychological services in Florida schools. This broader range of services is designed to impact more directly the rate of achievement of students and enhance the climate of schools where students learn.

These expanded services, therefore, often are designated on IEPs as "mental health services" rather than the more restrictive term "psychological services." The expanded definition includes, in addition to the services described in the federal definition, the following:

- crisis prevention and intervention services
- services designed to maintain and improve school safety
- assessment services designed to describe and monitor academic progress, emotional well-being, and instructional strategies
- functional behavior assessment and behavioral intervention planning
- networking school, home, and community resources
- parent/family training, counseling, and support
- research and program evaluation

2. Who provides psychological services?

The United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, does not specify who, other than a trained psychologist/school psychologist, is considered qualified to provide psychological services. In Florida, school psychologists and psychologists are considered qualified to provide these services. However, given the state's expanded definition of psychological services to include mental health services, other educational professionals (e.g., school and licensed mental health counselors, behavior analysts, and school and licensed clinical social workers) also may have the expertise required to provide one or more of these services. Therefore, the use of the term "psychological services" as a related service should not be limited to only those services provided by professional psychologists. By restricting the terminology in this way, Florida educators may erroneously report that psychological services are not available because a school psychologist or psychologist has not been the actual provider of the services.

Given the importance of ensuring that all students, both those with and without disabilities, have equal access to services defined as "psychological services" (or, if preferred, "mental health services"), school districts should consider the broad range of available qualified personnel in the provision of these services. Qualified personnel would be those

trained in the theoretical application of principles and practices of the science of psychology to the understanding and interpretation of human behavior. These personnel may be district school board employees, professionals from community mental health centers, independently practicing professionals, or a combination of these.

It should also be noted that some aspects of other categories of related services also may fall under the term "mental health" (e.g., counseling services, school health services, social work services, and parent counseling and training). The provision of these services, like psychological services, may not necessarily need to be restricted to specifically titled individuals but could be provided by others with the necessary experience, training, and expertise. In addition, contracted services from community providers may be utilized to support services that students require. These providers may use a variety of service delivery methods, from providing direct services to an individual child to providing consultation and training to school staff on the use of a particular strategy or method of assistance. School districts may collaborate with other agencies, such as the local office of the Department of Children and Families or the Department of Health, to facilitate the provision of needed related services.

3. How are psychological services delivered?

A qualified professional may provide psychological services directly or indirectly. Direct services are those services provided face-to-face to the service recipient (e.g., student, family, or educator) by the professional. Common examples of direct services include teaching social skills to an individual student or groups of students, assessing student academic skills through curriculum-based techniques, and individual or group counseling of students. Indirect services are those services that are provided by someone else under the direction or as a result of the skills and expertise of the qualified professional. For example, a teacher who implements a social skills program for exceptional education students in consultation with a school psychologist would be delivering direct psychological services, with the school psychologist delivering the services indirectly (through the teacher). A counselor who trains five students in conflict mediation skills would be delivering psychological services directly to those five students as well as indirectly to schoolmates of the five students who might benefit from their mediation skills.

4. Are psychological services limited to testing activities?

Although the answer to this question is unquestionably "no," it is often important to state the obvious. As defined by federal regulations and the psychology profession, psychological services include, but are not limited to, assessment, intervention, consultation, program evaluation, crisis intervention and management, and parent support programs.

5. How do we decide which psychological services to provide to students with disabilities?

The responsibility for deciding which psychological/mental health services to provide as related services lies with the IEP team. The team determines the nature and extent of the psychological services necessary based on the use of a problem-solving process. This team makes the initial decision regarding psychological services when a student is first found eligible to receive exceptional student education services or any time during the student's participation in the exceptional education program. The team may be reconvened at any time when service modifications seem to be needed. The decision regarding the need for related services typically occurs during the initial placement, annually at the IEP meeting, and/or during the reevaluation.

The IEP team determines if related services are required for a student to benefit from his or her educational program. The problem-solving process includes the following steps:

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- definition of the problem (child, classroom, school)
- problem analysis (assessment and decision-making)
- development of an intervention plan (specific strategies, the personnel to implement the strategies, and the location(s) in which the strategies will be implemented)
- an evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies

The psychological services that are determined necessary by the team should be

- selected based on their potential (empirical or clinical/educational data) to impact positively the attainment of the educational goals of the student
- evaluated on the degree to which their implementation will facilitate the attainment of the educational goals of the student

The team, composed of teachers, parents, administrators, the student (when appropriate), and the provider of the psychological services, should consider the need for psychological services in all of the settings in which education is provided to the student. The annual goals or short-term objectives may indicate needs in a variety of settings, such as the community or home.

The IEP team documents the psychological services required for the student, their frequency, and the length of time the student will receive those services. This information is helpful to those who must implement the IEP as the information assists with scheduling and managing resources.

6. What are examples of each of these types of psychological services?

ASSESSMENT

Psychological services are being provided when assessment is being conducted

- to determine initial or continued eligibility for exceptional student education
- as a component of the problem-solving process, to assess student progress or to modify instructional strategies
- to develop, evaluate, or monitor intervention programs or activities
- to determine functional relationships between student behavior and the factors facilitating that behavior

INTERVENTION

Psychological services are being provided when

- intervention programs are being implemented to enhance the academic and behavioral progress of students in exceptional and general education programs
- counseling and/or therapy services are being provided directly to a student or family
- teachers and/or parents are implementing programs such as social skills training, behavior management strategies, self-monitoring programs, and similar interventions that are developed in consultation with psychological service providers
- classroom or building discipline programs are being developed, implemented, and evaluated

CONSULTATION

Psychological services are being provided when

- consultation is carried out with parents, teachers, administrators, and students in order to implement assessment and intervention programs to enhance the academic and behavioral progress of students
- consultation is provided to building administrators or school district supervisors to implement building- (e.g., discipline programs) and district-level (e.g., crisis intervention programs) programs to enhance the learning environment for students with disabilities

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Psychological services are being provided when

- evaluation is conducted of the effectiveness of individual student interventions, classroom programs, building-level programs, or home/community outreach and intervention programs

CRISIS INTERVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Psychological services are being provided when

- crisis intervention and prevention programs at the school, district, or community level are developed
- district-level crisis intervention and prevention programs are implemented and managed

PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Psychological services are being provided when

- support services are provided to parents and caretakers to implement programs that enhance the parenting process
- training in social skills, academic assistance, and independent living skills are provided to parents for implementation in the home setting

7. When are psychological services required for students with disabilities?

For students with disabilities, the IEP team determines when and which, if any, psychological services (or mental health services) are necessary to assist a student in benefiting from his or her educational program. Although not required, the IEP team should include as one of its members the potential provider of the psychological or mental health services. If this is not feasible, a member of the team should be designated to consult with someone with expertise in delivery of psychological services.

Students with disabilities are educated, to the greatest extent possible, with students without disabilities in the least restrictive environment. It is important that students with disabilities have the opportunity to be educated in a climate that is conducive to their educational progress. Therefore, students with disabilities should learn in environments that are well-managed, where stress and anxiety are minimized, where fellow students are supportive and understand their needs, where parents are actively involved, and where special education services are integrated well with general education services. Psychological services, therefore, include consultation regarding classroom and building discipline programs, social skills training for all students, classroom-based interventions that promote understanding of disabilities and health-related disorders, parent training, and coordination of regular and special education programs (e.g., management/discipline programs).

In determining the need for psychological services, the IEP team should consider psychological services as those services that facilitate academic and emotional/behavioral progress by increasing the student's academic engaged time (AET).

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AET is the factor that best predicts and facilitates academic progress. There are many factors that have the potential to interfere with AET. These factors include student characteristics (e.g., attention, behavior/emotional strengths and weaknesses), curriculum factors (e.g., difficulty, format, relevancy), peer factors (e.g., reinforcing behaviors, modeling behaviors), teacher factors (e.g., teaching/learning styles, behavior management style), classroom/school environment (e.g., rules, distractions, routines, discipline plans), and home/community factors (e.g., parent support, home discipline, community safety, gangs, expectations). One or more of these factors has the potential to interfere with the AET and, thus, the academic progress of an individual student, a classroom, or a school. The goal of psychological services is to limit the extent to which these factors interfere with or facilitate the AET and to develop activities that result in improved academic and behavioral/emotional development.

8. Are psychological services available to students who do not have disabilities?

Yes. Psychological services may be of benefit to all students in a learning environment. Indeed many psychological services go beyond special education services to support the quality of general education within the school program.

The types of psychological services described above may be delivered to entire schools, classrooms, groups, or individual students. The outcome of these services is an environment in which students with disabilities, as well as those who are not disabled, have access to professionals with the necessary skills to positively influence their school experiences. Students with disabilities along with their classmates benefit significantly when psychological services are provided to all of the students in the school.

Students who are successful in school are much more likely to demonstrate positive behavior in school, home, and community settings. Successful schooling leads to successful employment and community integration. School violence, community violence, social behavior problems, and unemployment are linked to a history of school failure. Therefore, psychological and mental health services are a critical component of successful schooling for all children and youth, including those with disabilities under IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as those who are at-risk for school failure.

Note: For additional information on other related services as defined in IDEA '97, see IDEA Update #9, Memorandum #99-112, which accompanies Technical Assistance Paper FY 1999-13, "Related Services for Students with Disabilities," produced by the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services.

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